UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Bureau of Commercial Fisheries Edelsberg - 343-5634

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INTERIOR DEPARTMENT AWARDS CONTRACT FOR FISHERY RESEARCH VESSEL

The Department of the Interior today announced award of a \$1,990,000 contract to the Ingalls Shipbuilding Corporation of Pascagoula, Miss., for building an exploratory fishing vessel.

The new vessel will be assigned to the Department's Bureau of Commercial Fisheries Exploratory Fishing Base in Pascagoula. It is designed especially for operation in tropical waters and will play an important part in the Bureau's Tropical Atlantic Oceanography Program. This program is international in scope, involving the cooperative efforts of many countries, and requires the best vessels, equipment and considerable diversity of scientific skills.

Primary function of the vessel will be to determine the distribution and abundance of the many fish and shellfish resources of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean.

Director Donald L. McKernan of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries said specifications call for a 170-foot vessel displacing 906 tons, driven by two 800-horse-power diesel engines at a speed of 14 knots. It will be manned by a crew of 14 and have additional quarters and facilities for 11 scientists. The contract calls for completion within two years.

Director McKernan said the new vessel will be able to cruise up to 9,000 miles and will carry a wide array of scientific gear, including accoustical and electrical devices, for assessing the fishery resources of an area. Its size and seaworthiness will permit fishing operations in relatively heavy seas and under adverse weather conditions.

The Bureau of Commercial Fisheries has three other research vessels under construction: The David Starr Jordan, being fitted at Sturgeon Bay, Wis.; The Miller Freeman, being built in Lorain, Ohio; and an unnamed craft being constructed at South Portland, Me., to replace the Bureau's exploratory vessel Delaware.

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